AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A ~~rail assembly comprising:~~

~~a post;~~

~~a~~ rail component in association with ~~said~~a post and a plank, said rail component comprising:

a metal substrate for facilitating securement of said plank to said rail component; and

a composite outer layer comprising a plastic and at least one filler, said composite formed on said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by said outer layer~~; and~~.

~~a plank that is adapted to be secured to said railing component by at least one fastener, wherein said at least one fastener is adapted to engage said metal substrate of said rail component.~~

2. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said substrate is a sheet.

3. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said substrate has a higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said composite.

4. (canceled)

5. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said substrate has at least one perforation.

6. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said plastic is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl chloride.

7. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said at least one filler is selected from the group consisting of cellulosic fillers and inorganic fillers.

8. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 1 wherein said composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

9. (currently amended) A ~~rail assembly comprising:~~

~~a post;~~

~~a~~ rail component in association with ~~said~~a post and a plank, said rail component comprising:

a sheet of a metal substrate for facilitating securement of said plank to said rail component; and

a cellulosic-filled plastic composite outer layer formed about said sheet of said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by said outer layer~~; and~~.

~~a plank that is adapted to be secured to said railing component by at least one fastener, wherein said at least one fastener is adapted to engage said metal substrate of said rail component.~~

10. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 9 wherein said sheet has a higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said plastic composite.

11. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 9 wherein said substrate has at least one perforation.

12. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 9 wherein said plastic is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl chloride.

13. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 9 wherein said plastic composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

14. (currently amended) A ~~rail assembly comprising:~~

~~a post;~~

~~a~~ rail component in association with ~~said~~a post and a plank, said rail component comprising:

a metal substrate having a perforation, said metal substrate for facilitating securement of said plank to said rail component; and

a composite outer layer comprising a plastic and at least one filler, said composite formed on said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by said outer layer and said composite passes through said perforation in said substrate~~;~~ ~~and~~.

~~a plank that is adapted to be secured to said railing component by at least one fastener, wherein said at least one fastener is adapted to engage said metal substrate of said rail component.~~

15. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said substrate is a sheet.

16. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said substrate has a higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said composite.

17. (canceled)

18. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said substrate has a plurality of perforations through which the composite passes.

19. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said plastic is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl chloride.

20. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said at least one filler is selected from the group consisting of cellulosic fillers and inorganic fillers.

21. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein said composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

22. (currently amended) The rail ~~assembly~~component of claim 14 wherein:

said substrate is a metal sheet having a plurality of perforations; and

said composite is a cellulosic-filled plastic composite, said composite passing through said plurality of perforations.